

## [First Tripper]

FOLKLORE

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NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow Saul Levitt

ADDRESS 557 West 144th Street 557 West 144th Street

DATE July 6, 1939

SUBJECT Maritime Folklore —- FIRST TRIPPER

1. Date and time of interview June 29, 1939
2. Place of interview Seamen's Institute 20th Street & 11th Avenue
3. Name and address of informant  
Casimir L. Konapka Rm. 644, Seamen's Institute
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C

TEXT OF INTERVIEW (UNEDITED)

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NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow Saul Levitt

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DATE July 6, 1939

SUBJECT Maritime Folklore — FIRST TRIPPER

There's two ways of lookin at it. The good part and the bad part. I don't like the gas hounds, the G men, they take coupla drinks and it gasses them up. But otherwise it's all right. I like to study things, look around, take an interest in things and on the ocean I'm able to do that. I worked in a textile mill, I worked at that a year or so, then I worked on a farm. I got it on my own looks, this farm job. It paid fifty cents a week. Then I got a job on a regular farm for five dollars a week. I didn't have much time to play ball. I ran away from an orphanage and started life. I always had my mind set on the navy. I used to tell the farmers I worked with I'd join when I grew up. But they wouldn't take me, I was too young. So I went to sea.

I never been in no trouble. I'm all alone and I have to take care of myself. I don't drink, I don't smoke and I don't raise hell. Sometimes the sailors kid me about it. Once a feller asked me if I ever seen the Golden River. I won't say he was a Greek. He just kept kidding me. I hope you ain't embarrassed by this story. One night on the 8 to 12 watch I thought I'd

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take a look. So this old man, I forget what the heck his name was, he took me down and tried 2 to — you know. Did I get up that escape ladder fast!

Then there was something about the Iran Might . They kept talkin to me about it until I began to be curious. There isn't much about it. I asked what the Iron Might was. It wasn't much. Instead a steerin by hand it steers automatic. You leave the lever in such a place, it's just a lever steerin by itself. When you get out in the open sea you do that. They got the rate up on the bridge.

We used to get a lot of stowaways on board ship. One stowaway, his name was McGlustian. It was in September. He was in the Spanish war. I don't know if he was a Communist or a Fascist. He was fightin for a year. It took him six months to escape from the Communists. He came aboard ship to got somethin to eat. A coupla fellers gave him a few francs. He was banged up. He had one bullet in his stomach, in that bloody place below the knee. They clipped the hair off his scalp. He was a member of a union. We bought him a drink in the Rue de Gallianne. Then we left him there. Well, when we were a day out, we found him in the lazarette under the poop dock where they store gear. He comes out and goes up to the old man and tells his story. We took him to Norfolk, Virginia. When we got paid off we took up a collection for the guy. They say sailors are tough, well maybe the gashounds are, but a sailor wouldn't touch a cat. Anyway, we took up a collection, and took up his fare and bought him dungarees and a suit.

In Baltimore, I remember, it was some kind of strike. One feller had a pair of shoes and he was on the picket line. Then he hadda change places with another sailor and this guy didn't have no soles on his shoes. So the feller on the line took off his shoes 3 and gave them away and walked home in the bad shoes.

This morning I got off the 23rd street elevator a sailor picked me up and offered to carry my bags and I gave him thirty five [cents?]. That's nothing. Usually they lower the broom on you, ask for two bits or more. As soon as you get off the boat. I was on the Crown City.

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I've made three trips to Europe. Coming to New York. I went to the Far East too. I got yellow jaundice on that trip. Your eyes turn yellow and underneath your fingernails you skin turns yellow. You try to throw up but you can't. Everything bothers you and you can't eat. When we got to shore they sent me to a hospital and started pumpin me. That was the Mallamek. It was so full of scavengers and roaches they used to crawl up your pants leg. I quit on it. There were two inch roaches.

Other animals, too. Sailor pets are on board. Coming from the Phillipines we had fighting roosters and pigs. A greek picked up a coupla fighting cocks. One flew overboard and a pig one of the A.B's had disappeared. Canaries? [Everybody?] over there had one. Coming back from San Pedro off the Mexican coast, I saw black mammals and turtles six feet across. Lots of them. As if they were all goin to a convention, all of them were goin in one direction.

I took one dangerous trip. It was up to Hong King. We carried steel and barbed wire and tobacco and airplanes. We got a fifty dollar bonus but it wasn't worth it. There was a sign up: "No Shore Leave." But they all went anyway and they got dosed up and clapped up!

Some times I feel like gettin a job ashore. I'd like to go to school same place and learn a trade. But I don't know any rich people. There's one guy I know but he lives in Philadelphia and I'm afraid of him, he looks like a fag to me.